

# Research Facts

*Innovative studies today ... improved health care for our veterans and the nation tomorrow*

**T**he goal of the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) Research and Development Program is to improve health care for veterans and the nation. VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York participates in VHA's Research and Development Program by conducting biomedical, clinical, health services, and rehabilitation research investigations. There are research studies performed at each Network Medical Center.

Research Facts is designed to inform veterans, employees and the public about the significance, relevance and wide range of research studies that are being done by VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York researchers.

Many modern medical technologies have their roots in VA. VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York is committed to conducting safe and significant research that helps us deliver care based on the newest scientific information available.

## At the VA Western New York Healthcare System, Buffalo...

**Sanjay Sethi M.D.** is investigating why only about 20% of smokers develop chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Evidence suggests that other factors are important in the development and progression of COPD. Chronic infection of the airways by certain bacteria is one potential factor. Dr. Sethi, in collaboration with **Charles Berenson, M.D.** is also evaluating the ability of lung defense cells to respond to bacteria in COPD.



**Alan Lockwood, M.D.** and his research team have made substantial contributions to understanding tinnitus, a disabling condition that causes ringing in the ears and affects 50 million Americans. Veterans are affected at higher rates than the general population. The team has found that tinnitus is primarily a brain disorder and is linked to the changes in auditory pathways that occur as the result of hearing loss. The researchers have tested drugs for their effectiveness in relieving tinnitus and have developed techniques applicable to drug development and testing.

**Timothy Murphy, M.D. and Sanjay Sethi, M.D.** researched bacterial infection in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Results were published in the New England Journal of Medicine in August 2002. These results contribute to understanding the role of bacterial infection in the origin and course of COPD and in making the human immune responses to bacteria clearer. These findings have important implications in managing infections in COPD and in guiding the design of vaccines to prevent these infections.

## At the Stratton VA Medical Center, Albany...

**Arnulf Koeppen, M.D.**, a neurologist, has studied brain hemorrhage in experimental animals and implemented experimental therapies. Many veterans with strokes also have brain bleeding. The hemorrhage makes the outlook for full recovery much worse than expected. The reason is the presence of the red blood pigment. It is converted to free iron, and this metal causes additional damage to neighboring otherwise normal brain tissue. He has discovered that certain substances can block the release of free iron from the red blood pigment and thus make the added tissue injury much less serious.



### **Kathleen Bove, Ph.D.**

is currently doing research on how tumors grow and spread. Tumors require new blood vessels to form and provide nutrients to the tumor. In breast cancer, sex hormones regulate factors that can change the makeup of the cancer cells and blood vessel cells. By changing the makeup of these cells, we may be able to reveal potential targets for the treatment of human breast cancers and stop the development or growth of these tumors.

**Joe Engelhardt, Ph.D.** is conducting research on ways to improve end-of-life care for patients with progressive life-threatening illnesses by evaluating advanced illness care coordination (AICC). AICC promotes communication and understanding among patients, families, and health care providers about sensitive end-of-life issues that are often avoided. This provides advance care planning and patient education, coordinating health and social services for patients within complex health systems.

### **At the Syracuse VA Medical Center...**

**Robert J. Carey, Ph.D.** is conducting research to test anti-cocaine medications for their potential use



as treatments for cocaine addiction. Drug abuse/addiction is a serious problem that affects many veterans. The research conducted in this project is aimed at medication development to facilitate the treatment and recovery of VA patients affected with drug addiction.

**Michael Cynamon, M.D.** has been involved with mycobacterial research for over 20 years. The goals of his program are to define more efficient, shorter courses of therapy, and potential therapy against drug-resistant tuberculosis. His research laboratory has joined in a collaborative effort to develop a potential vaccine against tuberculosis with another VA investigator at Nashville, TN.



**Carlos Pato, M.D.,** Lead Research Psychologist for Network 2 and VA investigator, and **Michele Pato, M.D.,** Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development

(ACOS/R&D) at the Syracuse VAMC, have created the Portuguese Island Collection (PIC) to study the genetics of schizophrenia and bipolar mood disorder in a relatively homogeneous population. Geographically and genetically isolated populations have played a key role in disease gene identification. The PIC study group has established close collaborations with all of the clinicians serving this population. This has allowed Drs.

Pato unique access to patients and their families. Their PIC studies are identifying genetic linkages to schizophrenia and bipolar mood disorder. Schizophrenia and bipolar mood disorder are two of the most disabling neuropsychiatric disorders suffered by veterans.

*If you have any questions about research in the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York, you may contact the Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development at the VA Medical Center nearest you. Their contact information is as follows:*

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